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NSC BRIEFING

12 March 1957

THAILAND

- I. No settlement yet of disturbed political relationships in Bangkok.
  - A. Sarit attempting to consolidate position as strong man, and eliminate Phao.
  - B. Phao says he has plan to return to power.
- II. Phibun appears to be maneuvering to create new power balance between Phao-Sarit factions.
  - A. May try to keep Phao as police chief, drop him from cabinet, give Sarit lion's share of appointive seats in parliament.
  - B. Balancing out seems considerably more difficult this time.
- III. Government concerned over possibility new demonstrations in connection with convening parliament on 14 March.

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NSC BRIEFING

12 March 1957

THAILAND

I. No settlement yet of the recently disturbed power relationships in Bangkok.

A. Sarit, temporary supreme commander, acting suspiciously like one who would like to be the sole power behind the throne in Thailand.

1. While repeatedly professing his loyalty to Premier Phibun, reports suggest Sarit may be prepared to try to dump Phibun if the latter fails to accede to a number of demands, one of which would be the complete elimination of Police Director General Phao and his followers from all public positions.

2. Army security measures have reportedly been increased as precaution against possible acts of desperation by some of Phao's men who are fearful of losing their jobs if their chief is dismissed.

3. In this connection, Phao recently reported as saying he had a plan to regain power when things "cooled down."

II. Phibun, meanwhile, appears to be up to his old game and is maneuvering to create a new balance between Sarit and Phao as a means of retaining the premiership.

A. He faces a much more difficult task than in previous crises, however.

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- B. Composition of the new government is subject of some intense behind-the-scenes maneuvering; make-up probably tip off to Phao's future status as well as degree to which Sarit can make permanent his presently dominant position.
- C. Phibun's initial pitch seems to be to keep Phao as chief of police, but drop him from cabinet, while giving Sarit right to make appointments to most of the 39 parliament seats to be filled in this manner.
- D. Phibun also offering Sarit followers many 2nd-level cabinet positions.

III. In addition to own factional problems, government is concerned that new demonstrations may break out on or about 14th when the parliament convenes.

- A. Some reports indicate that students and opposition parties will take this opportunity to ~~again~~ <sup>again</sup> express their disgruntlement<sup>8</sup> over manner elections were conducted.

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